

CABINET

23 July 2013

Title: Children's Social Care Review 2012/13	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Children's Services	
Open Report	For Information
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: No
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Summary: <p>This report provides Cabinet with a review of significant operational service developments and inspections over the 2012/13 financial year within the Complex Needs and Social Care Division within Children's Services. The report provides a high level summary of action taken in response to local demand pressures and the Council's growing children aged under 5 demographic.</p> <p>The report illustrates that at a time of fiscal challenge and increasing demand, the work of the Division continues to be strong including some areas of 'best ever' performance.</p> <p>Section 3 of the report provides details of the work of the Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Children Board and areas of service improvement including the introduction of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH). The MASH will be based in Barking and will include the police service, health partners, housing, youth offending service and probation, education and social care and it is anticipated that it will be fully operational by the early autumn 2013.</p> <p>The report also provides more specific details regarding the Council's looked after children's population, including some key areas of performance which has resulted in a period of increased stability. The report also discusses pressures and priorities for the future.</p> <p>In particular, the report shares with Councillors the increased focus upon a) the timeliness of the adoption process and b) the outcome of the Family Justice Review which requires a change of practice for both local government and the judiciary if challenging targets regarding the duration of proceedings are to be complied with.</p> <p>Corporate Parenting arrangements and improvements have been embedded and the report describes our current corporate parenting arrangements as well as the roles of elected members with assigned portfolio leads, within our corporate parenting responsibilities.</p>	

Recommendation(s)

The Cabinet is asked to note:

1. The service improvements contained within this review report and action taken in response to local demand pressures.
2. The improvements to local corporate parenting arrangements and in particular the requirement of all officers and Councillors to continue to contribute to the Council's statutory requirements, as a corporate parent, with regards to the Borough's looked after children.

Reason(s)

- Cabinet is well aware of the demographic trend within the Borough and the impact of this trend in such universal settings as school provision and community health settings. An increasing population both numerically and in terms of diversity brings with it a challenge for our more specialist services, particularly at a time of increasing financial austerity.
- Cabinet will be aware of the 2012 Safeguarding and Looked After Children Inspections findings and the Council's requirement to strengthen corporate parenting arrangements throughout the Council.

1. Introduction and Background

1.1 The Complex Needs and Social Care Division comprises of three integrated service areas each with a Group Manager lead, namely:

- Assessment and Care Management Service,
- Looked After Children Service, and
- Disabled Children and Special Educational Needs Service.

1.2 The Division has operational responsibility for all Child Protection and Looked After Children services. More recently, responsibility has included Special Educational Needs (SEN) services in response to the government's Children & Families Bill and in particular the need for local authorities to plan and implement a more integrated assessment and support process for families who care for children with disabilities.

1.3 The Division is committed to:

- Earlier intervention and prevention through our own Prevention Service and via close operational relationships with colleagues providing targeted and universal support.
- Reducing the numbers of children in care.
- Minimising the duration of Child Protection Plans.
- Strong means of engagement with young people and their families so that they can 'shape' future services.

2. Safeguarding

Demand

2.1 Councillors are aware through previous briefings that our local social work service has experienced some very real increases in demand in recent months. The OFSTED Safeguarding and Looked After Children Inspection of June 2012 reported that caseloads were high but manageable. However, increases in demand at the end of 2012 persisted into 2013 and this increase in activity required additional resources to ensure risks were more manageable.

2.2 This increase in activity is best represented through some of the data.

- January 2013.

The service received 823 contacts (as opposed to 555 in December 2012) which equates to a 48% increase. Of these contacts, 238 progressed to a referral (116 in December 2012) which corresponds to a 116% increase. In January 33 children were brought into care, compared to a monthly average of 16.

- February 2013

This was also a busy month with 698 contacts, 223 of which progressed to referral. In February 13 children were brought into care, 10 of which were as a consequence of Police Protection Orders.

- March 2013

March was a busier than average month with 680 contacts, 248 of which resulted in a referral being made. In March, 15 children were brought into care. The increase in demand has also been experienced in April. A total of 661 contacts made with the service resulting in 136 referrals. The slight reduction in referrals was obviously welcomed by the service, but this may have been as a consequence of the two week Easter Holiday break. However, whilst referrals may have been down, there were 19 children received into care during the month, greater than the monthly average.

2.3 This increase in referral activity has created pressures within our Triage and Assessment Service and has also impacted upon caseloads within our longer-term Care Management Teams. The increase in activity and caseloads is also illustrated by the number of more detailed core assessments completed within the service (the majority within the Triage and Assessment Team). At the end of March 2012, 568 core assessments had been undertaken. By the end of March 2013, some 1,144 core assessments had been completed, almost exactly double the number completed in the previous year. This increase in activity is also illustrated in the number of Section 47 Child Protection investigations initiated across the year; 706 for the year 2012/13 compared to 506 for the previous year.

2.4 The majority of referrals relate to younger children aged 0 – 5 and this reflects the rapid demographic change within the Borough as well as the pressures experienced in more universal settings such as schools, primary health care services etc. There is also a change in the ethnicity of children requiring support which again is a reflection of the demographic change within the Borough. In the main, the predominant child protection issues the service is currently managing relate to the impact upon children where domestic violence is a factor within the

household and where there are concerns of physical abuse linked to chastisement and the provision of boundaries and 'consequences' for children.

- 2.5. Consequently the service has continued to experience high demand and this increase in activity appears to be more of a trend than a 'blip'. Additional resources have been agreed to assist with the increase in workload within the Assessment and Care Management teams and progress has been monitored via our 'Caseloads Action Plan', which is reviewed by a senior management group on a fortnightly basis. This has greatly assisted the Assessment and Care Management Teams and caseloads are now more manageable and in the majority below our target maximum of 20 cases per social worker. However, demand has not abated within the Triage and Assessment Service and managers will continue to monitor closely the demand within this crucial service area.
- 2.6 The high demand for social work within the Division has impacted upon the ability to retain staff and the service has rapidly moved from a position of relatively low numbers of locum staff to a large increase to cover vacant posts as well as those recently created to manage high demand. We have spent a great deal of time working with Adecco, the Council's agency and temporary staff recruitment contractor, to raise the profile of the organisation and to ensure a proactive approach to locum recruitment. Team managers meet with Adecco on a regular basis to ensure prompt recruitment. However, this has been a challenge and it continues to be difficult to recruit a) quality staff and b) staff sufficiently experienced to work within the Borough's current pressures. Direct recruitment has continued to be difficult and the Borough has experienced a change in the often fluctuating 'social work market' within London. Approximately a year ago the Borough was able to recruit experienced and quality staff, but current recruitment is more difficult and whilst there is a pool of newly qualified staff there are obvious limitations as to how many such social workers it is sensible to recruit within any service, especially a service such as in Barking and Dagenham where we are experiencing unprecedented levels of demand. A schedule of recruitment drives have been planned across the year with a view to the recruitment of a) valued locum staff currently working within the division and b) experienced staff to assist with the current pressures.

3. Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub

- 3.1 Over the past year plans have been put in place for our own local multi agency safeguarding hub (MASH). In future the MASH will greatly enhance our abilities to safeguard the welfare of children in the Borough in a timely fashion, based upon a multi agency approach. The approach has been particularly well regarded in Devon (where the first MASH was implemented) and has been strongly endorsed by OFSTED and 'The Munro Review of Child Protection'. The development of a local MASH has been encouraged across London and the service has contributed to the London-wide steering group charged with MASH implementation across the capital.
- 3.2 Essentially the MASH will consider all concerns raised by partner agencies on a multi agency basis. Referrals will be received by the MASH and existing information from each agency will be collated to better inform more timely decision making. This approach will ensure that:-

- Low level repeat concerns can be identified
- Concerns will not be 'masked' by volume or bureaucratic processes between agencies
- Enable effective interventions at the earliest opportunity
- One route in, and one decision making process, ensures a consistency and standardised approach to risk assessment

3.3 The creation of the MASH ensures that interventions can be timely via the application of information sharing agreements.

3.4 The MASH will be located at Roycraft House, Barking, and will include the police service, health partners, housing, youth offending service and probation, education and social care colleagues who are all key partners in the development of the MASH and have all contributed to the multi agency steering group in preparation for implementation. With the high levels of domestic violence experienced within the Borough we are also considering how best such specialist knowledge could also be incorporated within the final MASH model.

3.5 With the physical premises at Roycraft House now completed partners have begun to identify staff from their agencies to operate from the MASH and these colleagues will join the MASH incrementally over the course of the summer with a view to the MASH being fully operational by the early autumn.

3.6 A project plan and timeline is in place to ensure structure and 'pace' around the delivery of the local MASH and the multi-agency steering group will continue to meet and work upon the identified work-streams and will also provide initial governance for the MASH. A governance structure is being put into place to ensure that the MASH reports into the Barking and Dagenham Local Safeguarding Children Board.

4. Care Proceedings Pilot

4.1 The increase in social work activity has also resulted in an increase in the number of children for whom the local authority is seeking care orders to secure their longer-term safety and stability. At any one time Barking and Dagenham has approximately 90 cases within proceedings and many of these cases involve large sibling groups. Consequently the amount of social work time consumed by a) preparing for and b) attending Court is considerable, especially in a local authority such as ours with an increasing under 5's demographic. Current demand pressures have coincided with the conclusions of the Family Justice Review and a renewed maximum timetable of 26 weeks for the completion of all care proceedings. Consequently the Council has agreed to participate in a sub regional partnership of the 5 North East London local authorities linked to Stratford Family Proceedings Court aimed at supporting this transformation of the current process.

4.2 The Care Proceedings Pilot aims to promote good decision making in the Court and reduce unnecessary delay for children undergoing care proceedings. Evidence from the Family Justice Review and from local analysis indicates that care and supervision cases are taking longer to conclude. The search for certainty and the recognition of the enormity of the decision being made in care proceedings has led to a position where a wealth of evidence is heard in Court. In some cases however, there has been a lack of urgency and bureaucratic reasons

for delay. Routine cases can take almost a year to be concluded and such delay can impact negatively on children, as well as being financially costly for all parties.

4.3 Working together with the judiciary, the Court services, (CAFCASS) and other key stakeholders, the Tri-borough local authorities (Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea, and Westminster) started a pilot project whose aim was to minimise unnecessary delay. The Care Proceedings Pilot commenced on 1 April 2012 for an initial 12 month period, during which approximately 100 cases would have been heard. An early indication from the Tri Borough pilot has been that a number of significant factors need to be in place to maximise the impact of the project:

- The identification of a Court Case Manager, working directly with social workers, managers and the court itself. The aim of this post is to considerably improve the quality of social work assessments and statements presented to court as well practical, 'trouble shooting' assistance in relation to the proceedings timetable.
- Both the Inner London Family Proceedings Court and the Principal Registry of the Family Division have begun to work to provide judicial continuity in as many cases as possible. Magistrates and Judges have discussed the pilot and will be working to implement tighter case management of timescales for the child from the Court. Judicial consistency will obviously have beneficial impact upon timescales
- CAFCASS have made a commitment to provide timely and proportionate involvement from Guardians with cases being allocated from the first hearing.
- The Courts have agreed to a 'greater pragmatism' around the number and length of expert witness reports and will apply greater to significance to the reports provided by the social workers. Greater significance will also be placed upon the evidence provided during the first hearing and consequently the need for high quality evidence to be provided by the social worker, supported by the Court Case Manager, will be crucial.
- The pilot will create a feedback and learning loop throughout the life of the pilot, by monitoring and tracking cases and examining process, costs and outcomes for children. We will hold quarterly post case reviews in which all stakeholders will engage in a systems analysis and critical reflection about cases which have completed proceedings.

4.4 The project team and Barking and Dagenham officers will evaluate the success of the pilot in meeting the objectives and provide a cost benefit analysis which will be summarised in a final report at the end of the pilot period. It is likely that we will have a good indication by the end of 2013 about how effective the pilot has been in reducing unnecessary delay and therefore sustainability planning will take place at that time.

4.5 In Barking and Dagenham officers have identified a manager within the Council to operate as the Court Case Manager and LBBB is ahead of our neighbouring boroughs in this respect. Whilst it is 'early days' in terms of the project itself we are already seeing a positive impact being made with the appointment of our own social work operational manager in this post.

5. Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Board

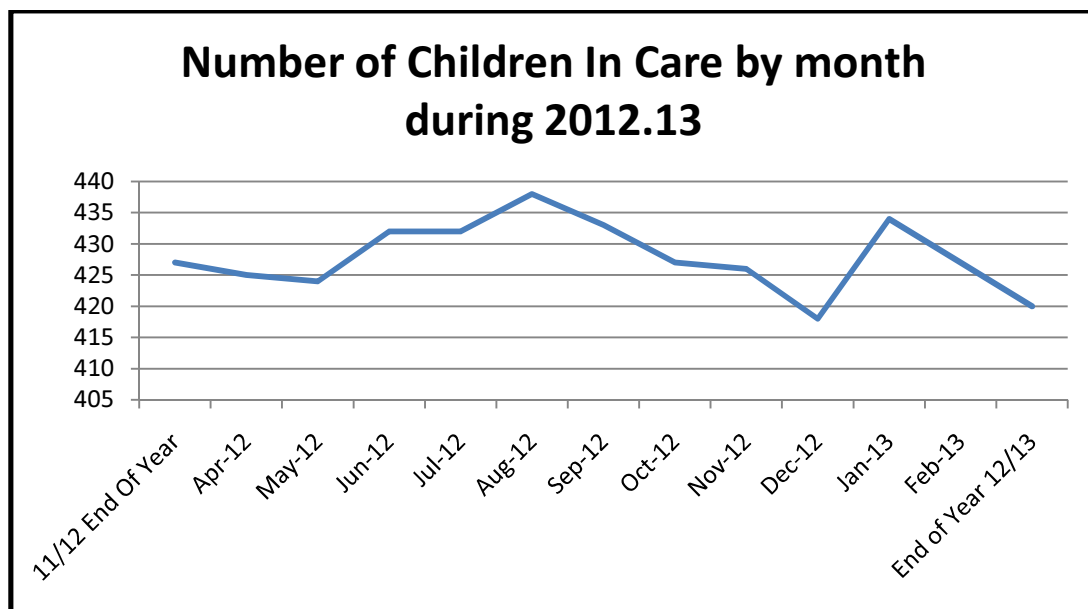
- 5.1 The Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Board produced its 7th Annual Report covering activity for the year 2012/13. The report discusses the outcomes of the Safeguarding and Looked After Children inspection of June 2012 and the subsequent judgements, 'good' for safeguarding and 'adequate' for children in care. The report also discusses the changing strategic landscape within the Council and the implementation of the Boroughs Health and Wellbeing Board and its connection to the Local Safeguarding Board's responsibility to provide strategic leadership for the safeguarding of children in the Borough. In particular, the Safeguarding Board report discusses the changes introduced with the passing of the Health & Social Care Bill and the role of the local Clinical Commissioning Group, commissioning local health services for LBBB children. The local Clinical Commissioning Group as well as the National Commissioning Board (NHS London) are both new partners to the Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Board.
- 5.2 Child protection guidance has been issued in the form of 'Working Together 2013' and the Safeguarding Board has taken a lead role in its implementation. The Authority's 'Quality Assurance Strategy' has recognised the requirement to scrutinise this area of activity (the quality of local 'early help' services will form part of future Ofsted inspections) and will form part of the Safeguarding Board's remit in future as the 'child's journey' through the local child protection system will be an increasingly significant area of future inspection regimes.
- 5.3 The Safeguarding Board's Annual Report continues to comment on the pressures experienced by all services as a consequence of the significant demographic growth in the children under 5 population, an issue which is also compounded by national welfare reforms. The national profile of the sexual exploitation of children missing / missing from care remains a particular priority for the Board and is an issue of heightened vigilance for all partners.
- 5.4 Priorities for 2013/14 include:-
- Embedding the guidance within 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2013'
 - The local roll-out of an e-common assessment framework (E-CAF) tool
 - Progressing the 'Troubled Families' agenda
 - Embedding the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
 - Strengthening joint working between Adult and Children's Services
 - Embed Quality Assurance through learning and development from the 'front line' services through to the Barking and Dagenham Safeguarding Board.
- 5.5 The Board's full report can be accessed via the link <http://www.bardag-lscb.co.uk/professionals/Documents/BDSCB%20Annual%20Report%202012-2013%20FINAL.pdf>.

6. Children in Care Numbers

- 6.1 The number of children in care fluctuated over the past 12 months, peaking at 438 August 2012, but this lower than last year's peak of 442 which occurred twice over the course of 2011/12. The end of year figure indicated a slight reduction in numbers to 420, a net decrease of 7 compared to the end of year figure of 427 in March 2012.

	2011/2012	2012/2013
Number of Children In Care	427	420
Number in Residential Care	29	22
Number in LBBB Foster Care	242	248
:of which in Borough	110	113
:of which out of Borough	132	135
Number in Agency Foster Care	87	81
:of which in Borough	15	10
:of which out Borough	72	71
% of all CIC in Foster Care Placements	81.0%	81.7%
Number of Private Fostering Arrangements	10	7

- 6.2 The profile across the year is illustrated in the diagram below. Growth in CiC numbers peak in August 2012 and then steadily falls, rising sharply in January 2013, which corresponds with a period of peak demand.



- 6.3 This indicates strong and improving performance across several areas of the service, namely:

- Improved gate keeping of services and care provision and better 'management grip' of process.

- The introduction of our Access to Resources Team and the commissioning of a range of 'edge of care' options to prevent care episodes and also placement breakdown.
- A more flexible use of our highly skilled foster carers to provide care but to also assist and support families where appropriate.
- The alignment of our in-house Prevention Service alongside the Access to Resources Team. This has meant that 'in-house' early intervention and prevention options can be quickly mobilised to provide support and solutions to families via the Crisis Intervention, Restorative Justice and Family Group Conferencing specialists available within the team.
- A change of culture amongst the social worker workforce, rather than seeking 'placements' the Access to Resources Team is now more frequently approached by practitioners with a range of family needs and strengths upon which a prevention package can be built. This is a much improved position from 'placements' being requested.

6.4 It is worth mentioning that this performance needs to be considered in a context of a rapidly increasing local demographic, experienced as a pressure in community health settings and primary school places. Consequently there has also been an increase in demand upon social care services within the Borough but this demand has been managed and stabilised (in terms of care provision) through the implementation of the above initiatives.

7. CiC Profile

7.1 The profile of the CiC population remained reasonably static. A 2% increase in children under 10 years old in care, a 2% reduction in 10 years+ when compared to 2011/12. Although slight this shift is illustrative of the local demographic position and also reflects our robust stance and interventions regarding the safeguarding of young vulnerable children within the Borough.

7.2 By ethnicity, compared to March 2012, populations remained reasonably stable other than a 4% reduction in white UK children being cared for by the Council. We have also noticed the beginnings of what we may see as a continuing trend of Eastern European families and particularly Lithuanian families, featuring in our care statistics.

7.3 Operational pressures have included an increase in young Black African children entering care via Police Protection Orders. The service continues to work closely with the Police Service regarding this issue (both 'uniform' and Child Abuse Investigation Team elements of the Metropolitan Police). A successful bid was also achieved for 'invest to save funds' to resource a strategy to more pro-actively address this pressure in the Borough.

7.4 The approach has 3 elements;

- Engage with and commission a specialist provider to work proactively with families whose children have been subject to police powers of protection and to

provide, through an 'educative process' alternative methods to provide boundaries and consequences for the children.

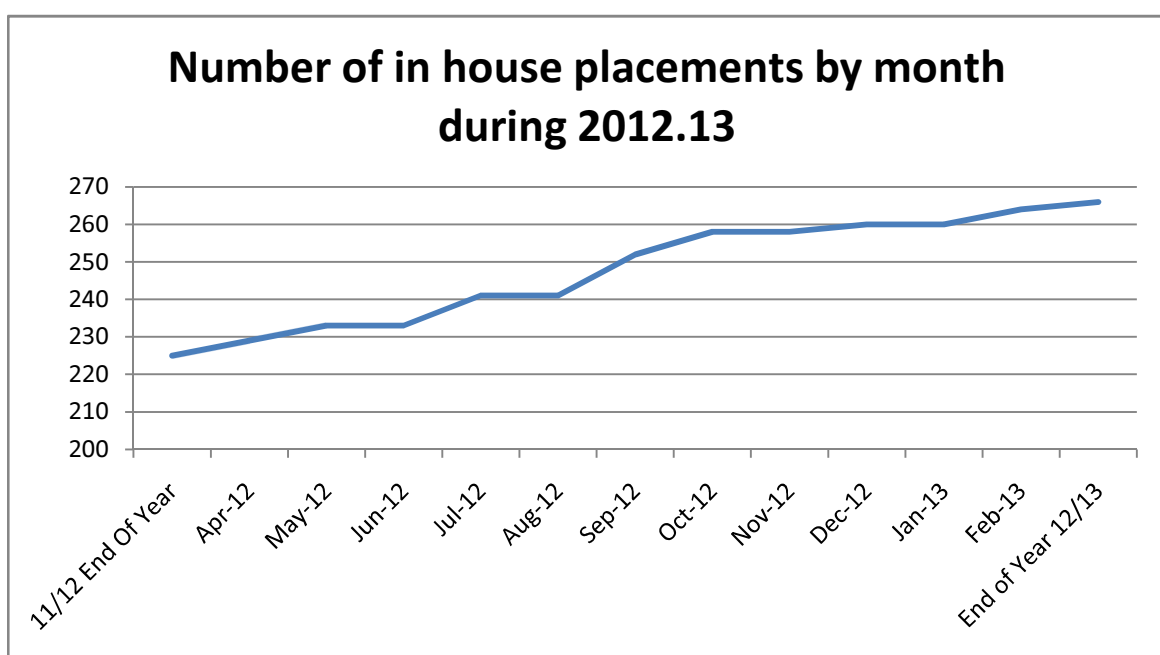
- Provide a training programme to targeted and identified universal providers so as to provide such interventions via more pro-active early intervention work
- To work closely with the local relevant faith and community groups and to provide support on a more 'anticipatory' basis and pro-actively prevent incidents where physical chastisement has been over used by families.

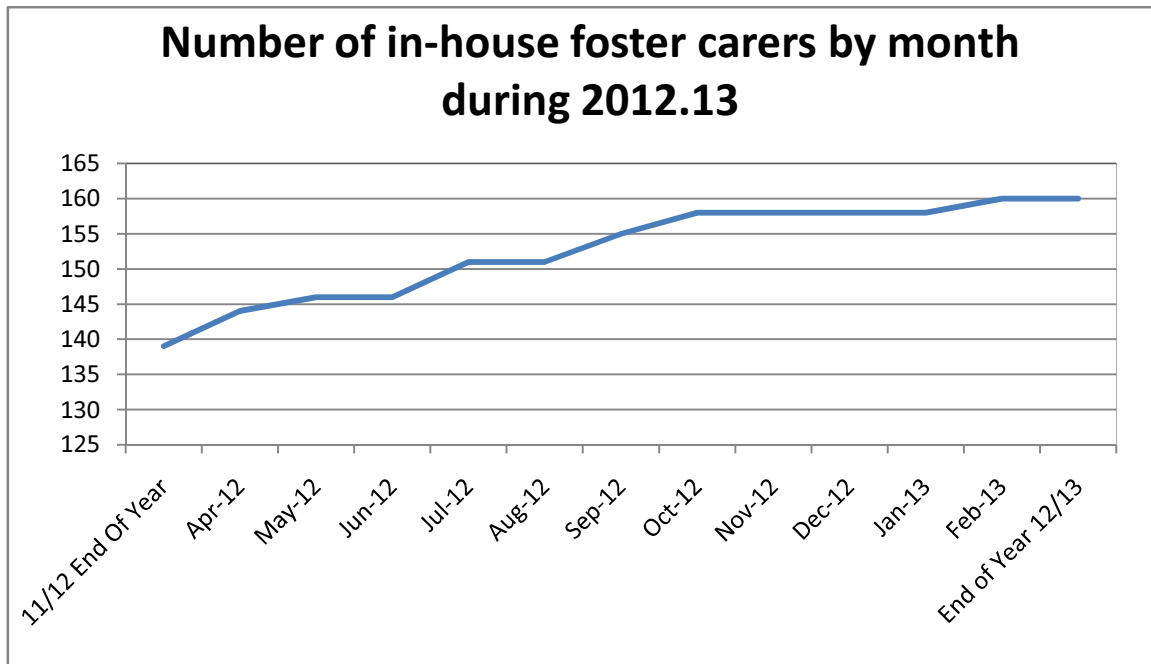
7.5 Children experiencing long standing chronic neglect and requiring care proceedings and subsequent placements as a consequence of escalation, still feature within our care population. However, an awareness of this factor has contributed to a greater expectation that universal and targeted partners will support such families through the early planning and mobilisation of help and support through the CAF and Family CAF process.

7.6 The performance of the Barking and Dagenham Fostering Service has made a huge contribution to some key areas of performance with regards to our looked after children population. At March 2013 the service had recruited 160 fostering households, compared to 139 in March 2012. Those 160 households were able to offer 266 placements to Barking and Dagenham children, compared to 225 at March 2012. This is a net increase of 41 placements in the year, far in excess of the team target of a net increase of 20 carers for the year. The team's performance is in direct contrast to that of neighbouring boroughs who continue to struggle to recruit new, quality carers.

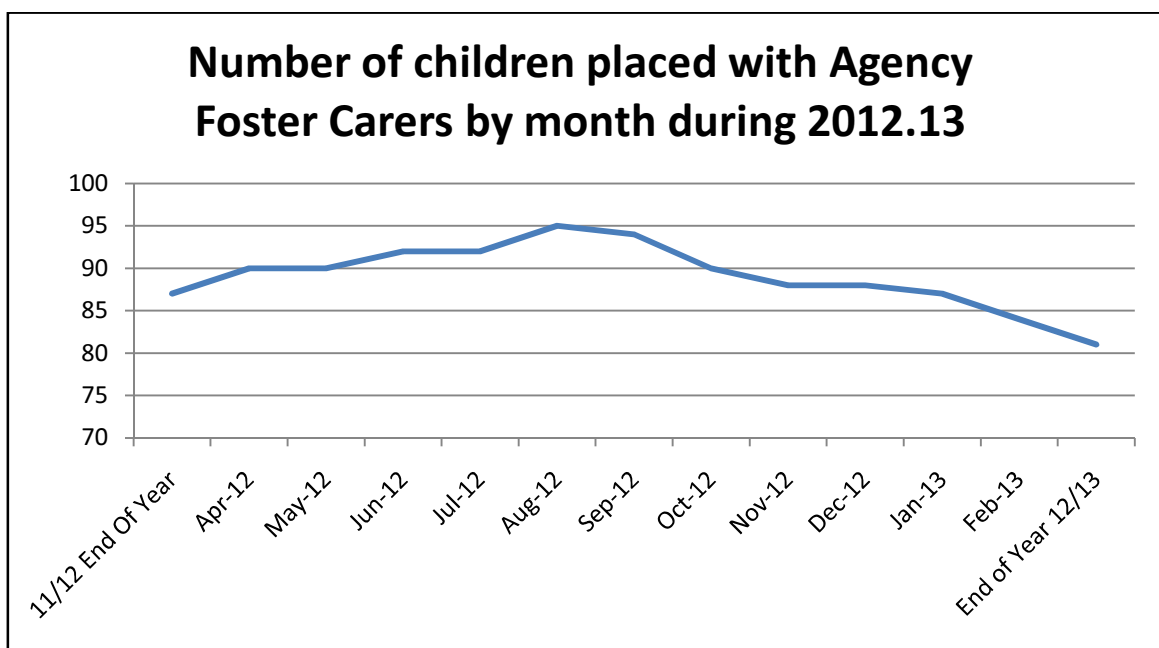
8. Placement type

8.1 2012/13 showed a growth overall in use of foster care. 329 young people in care were cared for within in foster care placements but an increasing number of these placements have been with the Borough's foster carers.





8.2 Use of Independent Fostering Agency (IFA) placements reduced slightly also over the year, 81 placements at March 2013 compared to 87 in March 2012. IFA placements frequently come with a cost premium so this reduction in usage has also had a positive impact upon the placements budget. The fostering team are also recruiting carers who have previously fostered for such IFA's. With the availability of local government finance contracting and children's placements being historically a high and volatile area of spend for any council, placing authorities have begun to reduce their usage of high cost IFA placements. This has resulted in carers, who have not received placements from their IFA's, approaching the Borough to become local authority foster carers. Here again this is a phenomena not experienced by our neighbouring authorities and is connected to the positive high profile of the team.



- 8.3 The Barking and Dagenham Pitstop Project (the LBBD specialist Multi-dimensional Treatment Foster Care (MTFC) scheme) at end of year cared for 9 young people. All these young people would require high cost residential placements if the Pitstop scheme were not available and consequently the team continue to provide a high quality and highly valued service. It has been a particularly successful year for the team. Over the past few months a number of children have completed the programme with their carers. Ordinarily at this point young people would then move on to an alternative family and more permanent long-term care arrangement. However, this year has seen a cohort of children for whom their attachments to their carers are so strong that all parties have made the decision to continue their existing placements. This is a hugely significant decision for these children and is a true measure of the success of the programme; the Pitstop carers in question have turned around the lives of these most troubled and damaged children and have prevented a potential pathway into institutional care, with all the associated poor outcomes young people subsequently experience. This move presents a challenge to the project as new 'replacement' carers need to be identified and trained, but it is of course a significant success story.
- 8.4 Pitstop also celebrated its accreditation this year via the national MTFC support team and the university research team based in Oregon USA. This is a hugely significant achievement for the team. Not only are they the first accredited programme for 7 to 11 year olds nationally, they are the first in Europe. The service is immensely proud of the team, their hard work and their commitment to young people and we can truly say that in Barking and Dagenham we have services that are amongst the best in Europe. The team's success can also be gauged by the number of enquiries received from other local authorities regarding placement availability. Until more recently such a move has not been possible but at time of fiscal reduction the team are considering whether financial sustainability can be secured through the 'trading' of possibly two Pitstop placements, established specifically to 'sell'.
- 8.5 Performance regarding the approval and availability of adopters also showed increased performance over the year. In total 39 adopters were approved in 2011/12, compared to 26 in 2010/11.
- 8.6 Usage of residential care also decreased over the year from 37 high cost placements to 29 at March 2012. These high cost placements continue to be monitored on a monthly basis with Children's Services Lead Member and the chair of the Members Corporate Parenting Group.
- 8.7 The table below offers some information regarding placement proximity to the Borough. Whilst an increasing percentage of CiC are cared for by Borough carers, not all foster families reside within the Borough itself. This is largely an issue of housing stock; the Borough has a very large 'council housing stock' which does not lend itself to surplus bedrooms and sufficient space in general to be available to make fostering an option for prospective families, hence the need to recruit carers from beyond the borough boundaries. However, as the table illustrates, 'out of borough placements' are in the main with neighbouring boroughs or authorities within a short distance of B&D itself, ensuring that contact with professionals is easily maintained and that some services provided within the Borough are still accessed by young people who do not strictly reside with us. Our Participation and Engagement Team is a strong example of such work in action,

working hard to maintain contact and engagement with young people wherever their placement settings may be. The Service is particularly aware of the pressures experienced by schools in Kent due to the large numbers of CiC placed in the county by London authorities in particular. Whilst our numbers of CiC placed in Kent are relatively low we have chosen to recruit a dedicated Advisory Teacher for such young people and for this teacher to be based in Kent and work closely with the schools providing education for LBBB CiC placed in the county.

Local Authority	No. of YP's Placed
LBBB	150
Havering	93
Redbridge	53
Essex	29
Kent	19
Placed for Adoption	13
Thurrock	11
South end on Sea	7
Tower Hamlets	5
Birmingham	4
Waltham Forest	4
Bromley	3
Hampshire	3
Medway	3
Newham	3
Surrey	3
Enfield	2
Hammersmith and Fulham	2
Lewisham	2
Suffolk	2
Croydon	1
East Sussex	1
Hackney	1
Haringey	1
Liverpool	1
North Lincolnshire	1
Norfolk	1
West Sussex	1
Wrexham (Wales)	1
Total	420

9. Adoption Performance

- 9.1 Previous reports to elected members have shared the strong performance of the Barking and Dagenham adoption team and in particular the inspection findings of 2012 which judged the service to be 'good' overall and 'outstanding' for safeguarding. Councillors will also be aware that the coalition government have raised the profile of adoption services nationally and have considered the performance of both local authority and independent adoption agencies.
- 9.2 In bringing 'rigour' to the performance of adoption agencies the Department for Education have, on a 6 monthly basis, published 'adoption scorecards' as a

measure of each local authority's adoption performance. The scorecards measure a) the average time taken between a child entering care and moving into its adoptive family and b) the average time taken from when the authority receives a Court Order agreeing to a child being adopted and the child is matched with an appropriate adopter. At present Barking and Dagenham's performance is outside of the target timescale for the former performance measure but within the target for the latter.

9.3 There are several issues to consider here which contribute to performance.

9.3.1 Barking and Dagenham has at any one time approximately 85 to 90 cases within the Court arena and the average length of proceedings is approximately 50 weeks. The reasons for this are varied (social work caseloads and case complexity, the insistence of a range of expert witness statements required by the courts, the exploration of extended family late in proceedings etc) but with the implementation of the Family Justice Review, all proceedings are subject to the target of 26 weeks for completion. This is a target for all parties including the Courts. Greater compliance will thus contribute to improved adoption timescale performance and we envisage the role of our Court Case Manager (as discussed above) to be highly influential in the improvement in this performance area.

9.3.2 The children for whom adoption is the preferred permanency plan are increasingly complex in nature within Barking & Dagenham. The Borough also has a higher number of sibling groups for whom we are seeking adopters. These added intricacies make for challenging family finding and matching. However, our adoption 'breakdown rate' is very low, especially when compared to comparator boroughs which suggest that the team takes the time to make the right decisions for children. Consequently this child centred approach may at times take the service performance outside that which is suggested by the Department for Education.

9.4 To assist with these challenges the Department for Education has provided all local authorities with financial assistance in the form of a one year grant, an amount of which is specifically ring-fenced to improve 'adopter recruitment performance'. The Barking and Dagenham Adoption Service have discussed a range of actions to target improved adopter recruitment.

9.5 The service shall also be exploring the use of this grant to provide a 'diagnostic'; essentially a review completed by an external agency (such the British Agency for Adoption and Fostering – BAAF) to provide an objective view of current practices within the adoption service and some analysis and recommendations as to how the service can be improved.

10. Members Corporate Parenting Board (MCPB)

10.1 The Borough's corporate parenting arrangements were identified in the Safeguarding and Looked After Children's inspection of June 2012 as an area that needed strengthening and whilst there was recognition within the inspection of action taken, the impact of the MCPB was still to be seen.

- 10.2 Following on from a workshop in April 2012, the panel itself was revised, new Terms of Reference agreed and the Corporate Parenting Strategy and Action Plan were reviewed and refreshed.
- 10.3 Since April of last year the panel has met regularly on a bi-monthly basis and has been chaired by Councillor Letchford, who is also the Chair of the Children's Services Select Committee. Councillor White, Portfolio Holder for Children's Services, has also attended regularly as have partners from health, social care, leisure services, education and the corporate management team. The Council's Rights and Participation Team have continued to attend and support the Borough's Children in Care Council (Skittlz) at the MCPB meetings.
- 10.4 The meetings themselves have focussed on a range of standard agenda items (including health, education and social care performance) as well as 'thematic' discussions which have been generated by young people themselves. In particular, the MCPB has focussed upon young people in care's ability to access leisure facilities (both within and beyond the Borough) and the connection to the range of associated potential health benefits, as well as the performance of our Leaving Care Service and their ability to support young care leavers accessing suitable education, employment or training options.
- 10.5 The Participation Champions group has also continued to meet on a bi-monthly basis as a sub group of the Corporate Parenting Group. This group comprises of young people and frontline social work practitioners and has been focussed around simple, pragmatic changes to practice aimed at making improvements to looked after children's lives. The group has discussed simple ways for foster carers to compile life story books with young people, implemented a range of ways that young people can contribute to their looked after reviews and has shared with young people the responsibilities foster carers now have through 'delegated authority'. The Participations Champions group itself continues to be a vibrant and stimulating sub group of the Corporate Parenting Board and is valued by young people and professionals alike.
- 10.6 The Children in Care Outcomes group has also continued to meet on a quarterly basis to provide rigorous, cross agency challenge with regards to various areas of performance linked to improving outcomes for looked after children. The group is data and target driven and provides an opportunity for all partners to debate performance as well as agree strategies to tackle areas of improvement.

11. Social Care Transformation Programme

- 11.1 As discussed above, the Children's Complex Needs and Social Care Division have been working with a range of challenges to service provision over the past 12 months. These challenges have presented in a range of forms; a series of external inspections conducted over the past 18 months; legislative and policy change at a national and local level; a challenging financial landscape set in stark contrast to a child population growing rapidly in both number and complexity of need. Consequently the Directorate Management Team has begun to consider how we need to transform current service deliver in order to maintain a high quality and supportive service to the most vulnerable children within the Borough. The programme is ambitious but necessary as we believe current operational models

are not sustainable at a time of increasing demand and complexity against financial contraction.

- 11.2 A number of strands of work have been developed as a result. As these work streams have commenced it has become apparent that careful coordination is required to ensure that all planned, and ongoing, strands of work take sufficient heed of potentially dependent and impacting parallel developments.
- 11.3 To this end it was agreed to implement formal programme management arrangements. These arrangements are now under the banner of the Children's Social Care Transformation (CSCT) Programme.
- 11.3.1 The purpose of this programme is to deliver the desired objectives of the CSCT Programme. In broad terms, this is the development and implementation of an operating model for Children's Social Care (CSC) which is both financially sustainable and provides the best possible outcomes for the most vulnerable children, young people and their families in Barking and Dagenham.
- 11.3.2. The programme will build on the 'business as usual' improvements that have already been made by the service, and will have a focus on responding to the more immediate concerns in the short-term, with medium to long-term strands of work focussing on ensuring future sustainability.
- 11.3.3 The programme will be adopting a 'whole system' approach in the belief that all services provided to families are inextricably linked and therefore interdependent. The project will also factor in consultation and engagement points with staff, partners and families.
- 11.4 The programme has a number of objectives with associated Project Groups, all of whom have project groups and leads. The objectives are:-
- Implement the changes required by the new Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance.
 - Address the pressures in the Assessments and Care management Teams.
 - Ensure services at Tier 2 are considered in light of changes at Tier 3, to ensure alignment and the smooth transition between the two.
 - Ensure that the Assessment and Care Management Services are redesigned to deliver service objectives whilst ensuring future sustainability.
 - Implementation of the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
 - Implementation and / or redesign of key IT systems to support operational service delivery.
 - Ensure that Looked After Children services are redesigned to deliver service objectives whilst ensuring future sustainability.
- 11.5 A Programme manager has been assigned to facilitate and support the progress of this transformation programme and governance will be provided via programme

board comprising of the divisional management team. The Programme Board will be chaired by the Programme Sponsor, the Children's Services Corporate Director. The Divisional Director for Complex Needs and Social Care will operate as Project Lead for this programme.

12. Consultation

- 12.1 This report has been widely circulated and comments where received have been included.

13. Financial Implications

Compiled by Dawn Calvert, Finance Group Manager

- 13.1 There are no direct financial implications to this report.
- 13.2 The Social Care and Complex Needs budget for 2013/14 is £29.291m. As at May 2013 the service is reporting a balanced budget for 2013/14. However, this position is masking £4m of management actions, a number of which are one-off and will not continue into 2014/15.
- 13.3 The change from LACSEG (Local Authority Central Spend Equivalent Grant) to Education Support Grant, together with the changes to the funding of statutory services to two year olds from General Fund to the Dedicated Schools Grant have released £2.7m of ongoing funding to invest in social care demand pressures. Grant income of £604,000 is available in 2013/14 to manage pressures but, at present, there is no indication this will continue into 2014/15.
- 13.4 The Targeted Support Division is forecasting an under spend in 2013/14 of £1.060m but this is largely as a result of the early achievement of approved savings for 2014/15 which means this is unlikely to continue into 2014/15. Finally, a drawdown of £0.754m will be required from the Children's Services Reserve to achieve a balanced budget position for 2013/14.

14. Legal Implications

Compiled by: Lindsey Marks, Principal Solicitor

- 14.1 The responsibility of corporate parenting applies to the Local Authority as a whole and not just the departments directly responsible delivering services to children and young persons.
- 14.2 The Children Act 2004 and statutory guidance specifies that the Cabinet Member for Children Services has the lead political role in respect of looked after children and young people contributing to and being satisfied that the Local Authority has high standards of corporate parenting.
- 14.3 Since the 1 September 2012 the Adoption Panel no longer makes recommendations to the Agency Denison Maker as to whether or not a child should be placed for adoption save in the case of a relinquished baby.

15. Other Implications

- 15.1 **Staffing Issues** - There are no specific staffing issues contained within this report. However, increased demand pressures in the past six months have required the agreement of additional staffing to manage this demand. Whilst this additional support has greatly assisted, demand has not abated. Further divisional and directorate consideration needs to be given to the level of future staffing as a consequence of the Social Care Transformation programme as discussed above.
- 15.2 **Customer Impact** - The report highlights the areas of service improvement, as well as the areas where performance continues to be addressed. Children and their families will continue to experience a positive response to their social care needs. In particular the strengthened role of the Members Corporate Parenting Board has provided more rigorous oversight and scrutiny with regards to the outcomes for the Borough's looked after children population.
- 15.3 **Safeguarding Children** - The report also highlights the strength of the local safeguarding children board and the contribution of the partnership to the safeguarding of local children. Services are determined to continually improve but such aspirations are an ever increasing challenge within a local context of growing demand and fiscal austerity.
- 15.4 **Crime and Disorder Issues** - The MASH element includes Police and Probation colleagues and is a route whereby early identification of sexual exploitation, gang membership and other crime and disorder issues may be identified and is therefore seen as a positive support process for reducing crime and disorder.

The new LASPO legal arrangements for young people on remand will have an impact on Children's Social Care capacity, and whilst this is funded from central government, this is a new development and therefore may need a review within the next year or so in order to measure the capacity impact.

Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report

- Children & Families Bill, Department for Education, June 2013
- Family Justice Review, Department for Education, November 2011
- Health & Social Care Bill, Department of Health, January 2011.
- 'Working Together to safeguard Children, Department for Education, April 2013',

List of Appendices: None